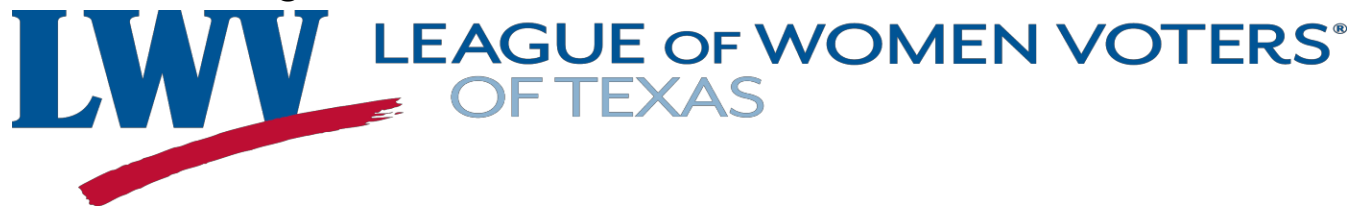


## Interim Charge 2



**RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR  
INFORMATION LEAGUE OF WOMEN  
VOTERS OF TEXAS HOUSE ELECTIONS  
COMMITTEE  
SUBMITTED FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2020**

I am Cinde Weatherby, forwarding information as a member and on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Texas (LWVTX) in response to the Committee's Formal Request for Information regarding three interim charges to the House Elections Committee. We appreciate the opportunity to add our voice and information to your collection of information regarding these three important charges. Thank you.

LWVTX submits to the Committee that each charge in the Committee's Request for Information reflects the need for modernizing our state's elections system.

In recent times, our own organization faced the same need. Upon fully embracing modernization of our systems, we see a drastic improvement in member and public engagement. It also empowers us to assist the public in directly connecting to the official and factual resources of the Secretary of State and county election offices. The worldwide health crisis exponentially magnifies the need for safe, modern systems in every aspect of our state's voting process. For Texas to best serve its citizens, LWVTX suggests that the House Elections Committee interim report emphasize this overarching need for special attention during the 87th Session to issues enumerated in each of the three interim charges.

## Interim Charge 3

### Voter Registration & Voter List Maintenance

The voting experience in each U.S. state, other than South Dakota, begins with voter registration. The ease of the registration process is key to engaging citizens in voting. Equally important is faith in the accuracy and security of the voter registration rolls.

Texas is years past due in taking action to modernize the way voters register. The current system is archaic. It requires voters filling out paper forms that someone else must decipher during data entry into the electronic database. That process is ripe for inaccuracy, costly, untimely, and inconvenient. It limits access to those who acquire a paper form, either in person or by printing one.

Much better is an electronic form that can be completed by the prospective voter who could directly use one of the much more generally available computer devices (mobile phone, tablet, computer). The voter registration rolls for all Texans are already in computer form. This statewide voter registration database is invaluable in conducting our elections. It receives secure input and is available with the involvement of the Department of Public Safety, local county election offices and the Texas Secretary of State.

As we endure the current COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of having no method for electronic voter registration is obvious. Voter registration numbers plummeted. Texans have demanded an electronic system for many years. When League members are registering voters, they find it is universal. Voters of all ages and backgrounds want this opportunity to register to vote. They want to know the information about them will be correct when they go to vote, and they want no delays. With our Texas population as mobile as it is today, many citizens come from other states that offer the benefits of electronic registration or same-day registration across the country.

There are multiple trusted resources documenting the improved processes used by almost all of the other U.S. states. There is widespread use of a form of electronic voter registration since Arizona first implemented their program in 2002. There has also been much study and evaluation of implementation.

The National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL) provides a plethora of information about the nuances in each state's electronic voter registration system. The Pew Charitable Public Trust research is also valuable. Pew work also led to not only the ability to compare and share state voter registration data, but eventually a state-run Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) that Texas just joined. Pew's website

also has a very valuable [interactive map of states<sup>xii</sup>](#) posted, providing details as of 2018 on each state's legislation, development, features, access, and processing. The gateway for numerous NCSL documents about voter registration is available [here<sup>xiii</sup>](#).

Texas can benefit from the lessons learned from the more than 40 other states using an electronic-based voter registration system. Documentation about state collaboration with local jurisdictions is also available. LWVTX does not have an official position on this specific issue; however, we point to the need to seriously engage with a representative number of county election officials to inform any legislative action.

Because of the nature of preparations for the 2020 elections during the pandemic emergency, the Secretary of State's office has opened robust and ongoing communications with local election officials. We realize this communication process cannot be used to formulate legislative proposals but can point to best practices. We believe a successful transition to an improved voter registration process demands the involvement of the election officials who must make the system work. Any legislation considered should address that involvement, perhaps incorporating an advisory group in the enabling legislation.

Texas membership in ERIC will be enhanced by adopting an electronic voter registration system. Ongoing list maintenance demands it. The better the registration process, the more reliable and efficient will be the list maintenance. It also offers possibilities for additional safety and security.

Electronic voter registration has continued to improve and evolve in the last decade. A variety of options are now available and have been scrutinized. A recent scholarly research document summarizes the [effects of automatic voter registration<sup>xiv</sup>](#) in the U.S. A [summary brief<sup>xv</sup>](#) provides an overview of the research.

NCSL posts comprehensive up-to-date information on the status of all states using electronic registration. The organization posted an [updated overview<sup>xvi</sup>](#) August 19, 2020. It includes charting of the adopting state program status, noting year enacted; bill numbers if legislation was used; year implemented; and website links to the state's EVR program. Another [exhaustive NCSL research resource<sup>xvii</sup>](#) produced in September 2016 offers information on all voter registration approaches including in-person, Departments of Motor Vehicles involvement, automatic voter registration, online voter registration, same day registration and pre-registration for 16 or 17 year-olds; as well as statewide registration database requirements and maintenance.

Thus, there is no scarcity of existing research and experience to benefit Texas lawmakers as they proceed with modernizing our Texas system. There are also many who have direct experience with this subject who can be called upon to assist.

## Volunteer Deputy Registrar Process

Regardless of the offer of electronic voter registration, there will always be a need for in-person registration. There will likely continue to be those individuals who do not have ready access to electronic equipment or the ability to use it.

In a preliminary search, we find no other states with limitations like those placed on Texas Volunteer Deputy Registrars.

## Curbside Voting

LWVTX offers the suggestion that the time will be ripe following the November 3, 2020 election to survey counties for observations on the execution of curbside voting. We are aware of many counties that have adopted creative solutions to use in the July and November 2020 election.

As the old saw says, “necessity is the mother of invention.” Our courageous, dedicated county election officials have been perfecting mechanisms and procedures to make voting safe and secure under this duress. The Texas Secretary of State’s office appears to have also provided the most creative and helpful solutions possible under existing law. As preparation for the legislative session begins, we are hopeful that county election officials will be comparing notes and sharing their most successful and reasonable solutions that can then be considered.

Weblinks for each information source cited

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<sup>i</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L674gNYbtmB0q0FDAb5papx041ZWUDMc/view>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qfhhNJIUrY2d7JXR7JLc1pkheyGJORMu/view>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jg0uqkUdKwVdUQKrRXR-LYQKXhVdxzT/view>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ieLumAxFB456mj6RsS-eDGUr43OQ678S/view>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.votetexas.gov/>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.votetexas.gov/>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://teamrv-mvp.sos.texas.gov/MVP/mvp.do>

<sup>viii</sup> <https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/laws/advisory2015-04.shtml>

<sup>ix</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AefzMiVrCDHmFEpx4s3Iayd953pzvyMn/view>

<sup>x</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AefzMiVrCDHmFEpx4s3Iayd953pzvyMn/view>

<sup>xi</sup> <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/election-emergencies.aspx>

<sup>xii</sup> <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/data-visualizations/2016/state-online-voter-registration-systems>

<sup>xiii</sup> <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-registration.aspx>

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<sup>xiv</sup> <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57b8c7ce15d5dbf599fb46ab/t/5eb9847fb7a1f3362ced2d99/1589216438166/USC+CCEP+Effects+of+AVR+in+the+U.S.+Final.pdf>

<sup>xv</sup> <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57b8c7ce15d5dbf599fb46ab/t/5eb8fafa0e4d61663a1833f4/1589181180589/USC+CCEP+Summary+Brief+-+Effects+of+AVR+in+the+U.S.+FINAL.pdf>

<sup>xvi</sup> <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/electronic-or-online-voter-registration.aspx>

<sup>xvii</sup> <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-registration.aspx>